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IX.—Care and Feed of the Dairy Cow.

By C. V. GREGORY,

Author of "Home Course in Modern Agriculture," "Making Money on the Farm," Etc.

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THE dairy barn may be either part of the general farm barn or a separate building. In the former case the part of the barn where the cows are kept should be partitioned off from the rest to keep out dirt and odors. There should be plenty of light. An occasional coat of whitewash will make the barn lighter and cooler. Where there are two parties of cows they should face outward. In this way the manure will be kept at the center of the barn instead of being splashed along the

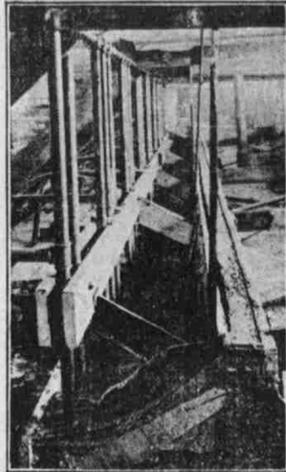


FIG. XVI.—MAKING CEMENT MANGERS.

sides. The cows can be run in and out handier and be milked more conveniently. The manure can be easily cleaned out with a wheatharrow or an overhead litter carrier. The floors should preferably be made of cement, with fairly deep, wide gutters of the same material. Plenty of bedding should be used to soak up the liquid manure.

Ventilation.

Provision for some sort of ventilation should be made. The plan of having the windows placed high and so arranged that they swing in at the top provides good ventilation, especially if there are windows on both sides. Triangular pieces of board at the sides of the windows prevent drafts and cause the air to be forced upward toward the ceiling, where it is distributed all over the room. The King system of ventilation works well where the barn is tight. Flues for impure air open at the floors and extend up to cupolas in the roof. The pure air flues open near the ground outside and at the top of the room inside. This secures a constant circulation of air without drafts. In a frame barn these flues can be made by boxing in the space between two studdings.

Iron swing stanchions cost very little more than the old fashioned wooden ones and are a great deal more convenient and durable. The mangers may be made of cement, in which case they may be used for watering the cows in extremely cold weather. If the farm is provided with some sort of water system a pipe can be laid to one end of the manger, so that water will be constantly on tap either for flushing out the manger or watering the cows. With a short piece of hose the floors and gutters can be flooded occasionally and thus kept clean and free from bad odors. Both the floor and gutters should have sufficient slope to carry the water off.

Where the cows are watered from a tank, as they will be most of the time, some means of heating the water should be provided. If the cow has to heat it herself it is with corn as fuel. Instead of with coals, as where a tank heater is used. If the tank is banked and covered, a little fire every morning will keep the water at a comfortable temperature.

The dairy cows should receive salt regularly. It is necessary to the process of digestion and causes an increased milk flow. A self feed covered salt box somewhere in the yard will provide a constant supply of salt without waste. Care should be taken not to let the box get empty, and if it should happen so the cows should be gradually accustomed to salt again before they are given all they will eat.

Regularity in Milking and Feeding.

Regularity in milking and feeding is essential. Irregular milking always reduces the yield. Be sure to milk thoroughly, manipulating the udder to be sure that all the milk is withdrawn. Nothing will cause a cow to dry up more quickly than leaving a little milk in the udder each time. The udder should be wiped with a damp cloth before milking to remove dust and dirt. Each particle of dust carries thousands of bacteria. Cleanliness is the first essential in producing high class dairy products. The feeding should be done immediately after

milking, especially if silage, turnips or other strong smelling feeds are used. If fed at this time there is little danger of tainting the milk.

The heifers should be milked for as long a time as possible during their first milking period. If they are allowed to go dry after five months or so they will never prove profitable dairy animals. It is the cow that keeps up a good milk flow ten or eleven months of the year that adds to the dairyman's profits.

Kindness is an essential point in handling dairy cows. Any unnecessary roughness causes the cow to hold up her milk and reduces the profits.

Feeding.

For three days before and three days after calving there is no better ration for the dairy cow than a mash of two pounds of bran and one pound of oil-meal, fed twice a day. Do not be in too big a hurry to get the cows on full feed after calving. The ration should be increased gradually and slowly from five to six pounds daily to all the cows can profitably use. An increase of half a pound every alternate day is sufficient. This increase should be kept up as long as the milk flow continues to get larger. When the point is reached where increases in feed do not produce corresponding increases in milk flow the feed should be gradually decreased again. The first few pounds decrease will not affect the milk flow. When the point is reached where a further decrease in feed causes a lessened milk flow the most profitable ration for that particular cow has been determined. It takes a little extra work to do this weighing, but after the best sized ration for each cow has been determined the approximately correct amount can be measured out each time with little trouble. It pays to feed the cow all she can use profitably. It costs just so much to keep her anyway, and all the feed that she can use to advantage over that amount adds to the profits.

During the summer the feeding problem is a simple one. With plenty of good pasture, supplemented in dry times by some forage crop and some sort of protection from flies, the milk flow will be kept up to a profitable standard. In the absence of forage crops silage can be profitably substituted.

It is in winter that the highest prices for dairy products are secured, and if the cows freshen in the fall the main part of the year's product will come at this season. The problem of winter feeding is one of the most important with which the dairyman has to deal. If you have plenty of good clover or alfalfa hay and silage the problem is more than half solved. From thirty to forty-five pounds of silage and ten to twenty pounds of clover hay a day will make up the bulk of the roughage needed. A rack in the yard filled with corn fodder or oat straw will add variety to the ration. Where silage cannot be obtained a plentiful supply of pumpkins, squashes, turnips or mangels should be at hand to supply the succulent part of the ration. Without some such feed the cows will not do their best.

Mixing the Rations.

Although dairy cows can handle large amounts of rough feed, they need considerable grain in addition during the winter. Corn, because of its cheapness and high feeding value, will generally form the basis of the grain rations. Because of its high percentage of carbohydrates and fat some feed rich in protein should be fed with the corn. Oats are good, but they have only enough protein to

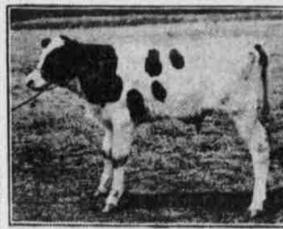


FIG. XVII.—A HOLSTEIN CALF.

make a balanced ration in themselves, and in addition they are generally too expensive to be fed in large amounts. Bran is one of the best of supplementary feeds when it can be obtained at fair prices. A little oilmeal, not over two pounds a day, has a laxative tendency and tends to keep the cows healthy. Cottonseed meal is used considerably in the south. It not only softens the corn, but also gives hardness to the litter, so that it will not mat so easily. Gluten feed is usually a cheap source of protein, but is disappointing if fed in large quantities. The following are a few sample rations that will serve as a guide in mixing feeds:

	Pounds.
Clover or alfalfa hay	5
Gluten feed	5
Silage	30
Bran	20
Clover or alfalfa hay	15
Straw or fodder	15
Mangels or squashes	25
Corn	6
Straw	2
Oilmeal	1
Alfalfa or clover hay	25
Cottonseed meal	2
Gluten feed	4
Gluten feed	1
Silage	40
Alfalfa hay	10
Corn	2
Gluten feed	2
Cottonseed meal	2
Silage	40
Wheat hay	10
Shredded fodder	10
Corn	2
Bran	2
Oilmeal	2
Wheat	2

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